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CEREBUS

JAKA'S STORY 10

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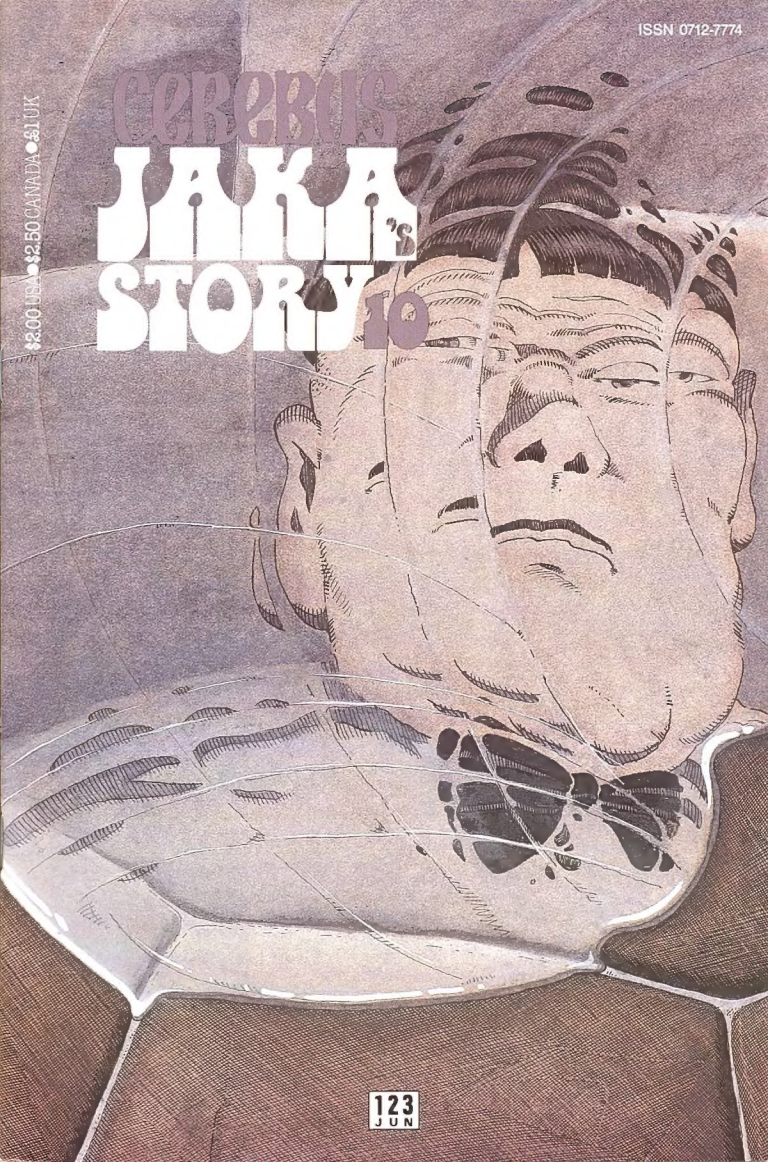

123
JUN

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

CEREBUS

NO. 123 JUNE 1989

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

MONIQUE KAPTEIN
Administrative Assistant

Circulation
24,500

JAKA'S STORY
a novel

•

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 114)

•

POGROM'S PROGRESS
(Cerebus 115 to
Cerebus 119)

•

THE POET
(Cerebus 120 to
Cerebus 130)

•

MYSTERY ACHIEVEMENT
(Cerebus 131 to
Cerebus 136)

•

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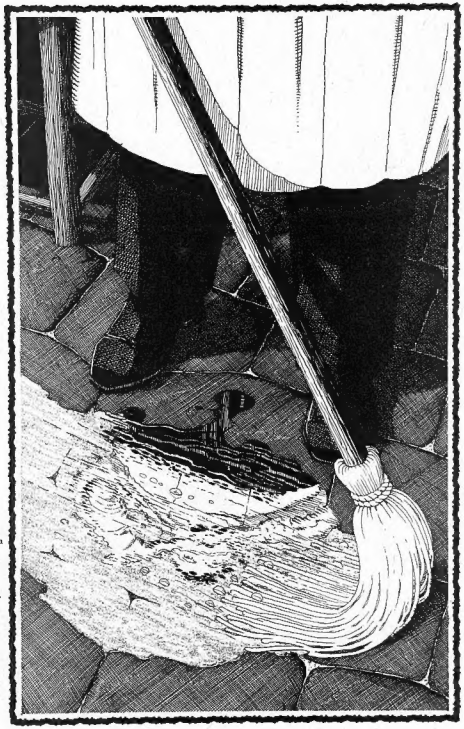
PRINTED IN CANADA

Miss Jaka. My mother died just about a year ago now.

Oh, Pud. Your mother. I'm so sorry.

That's okay Miss Jaka. She went quietly in spite of all the pain.



Miss Jaka. My wife died just about a year ago now.

Oh, Pud. I didn't know. I'm so sorry.

It's okay, Miss Jaka. She went quietly and there wasn't much pain. Praise Tarim.

Praise Tarim.

You and your husband, Miss Jaka. You're happy here?

Oh, yes, Pud. You've been wonderful. We owe you a lot.

You're lucky to have each other, Miss Jaka.

Yes. Yes we are.

I haven't got anyone Miss Jaka.

You and your husband, Miss Jaka. You're happy here?

Oh, yes, Pud. You've been just wonderful. We owe you a lot.

You're very lucky to have each other, Miss Jaka.

Yes. Yes we are.

Miss Jaka there's no reason you and your husband can't stay on here with your free apartment and make enough money to buy

You're very lucky to have each other Miss Jaka.

Yes. Yes we are.

I'd like both of you to stay here for a long time.

Oh, Pud. I'm so glad. We are happy here.

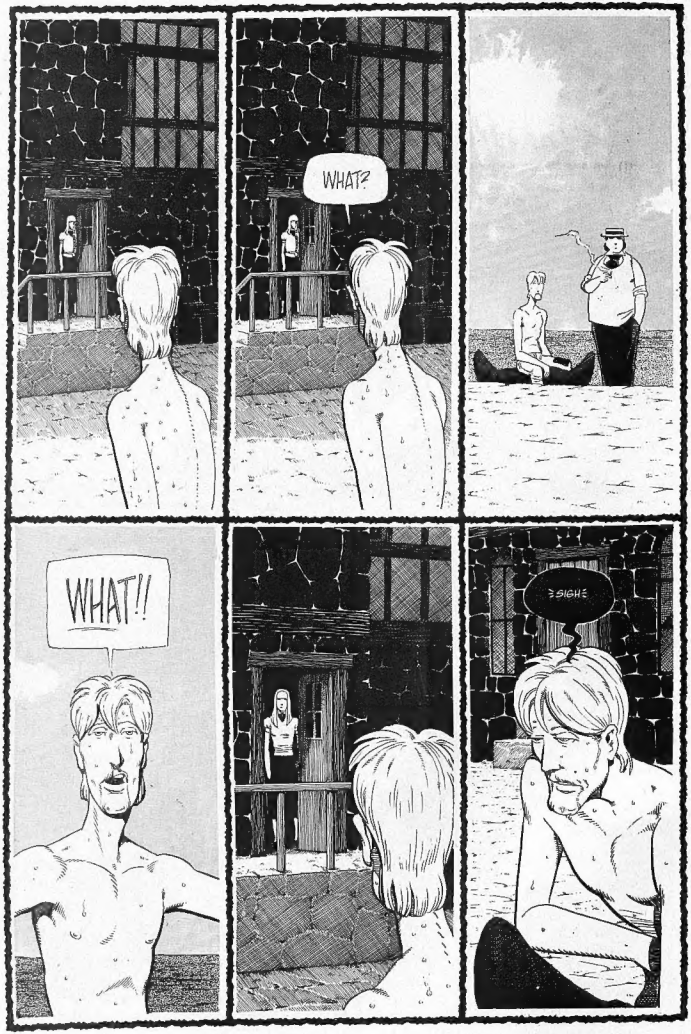
Except. There will have to be some...changes made.

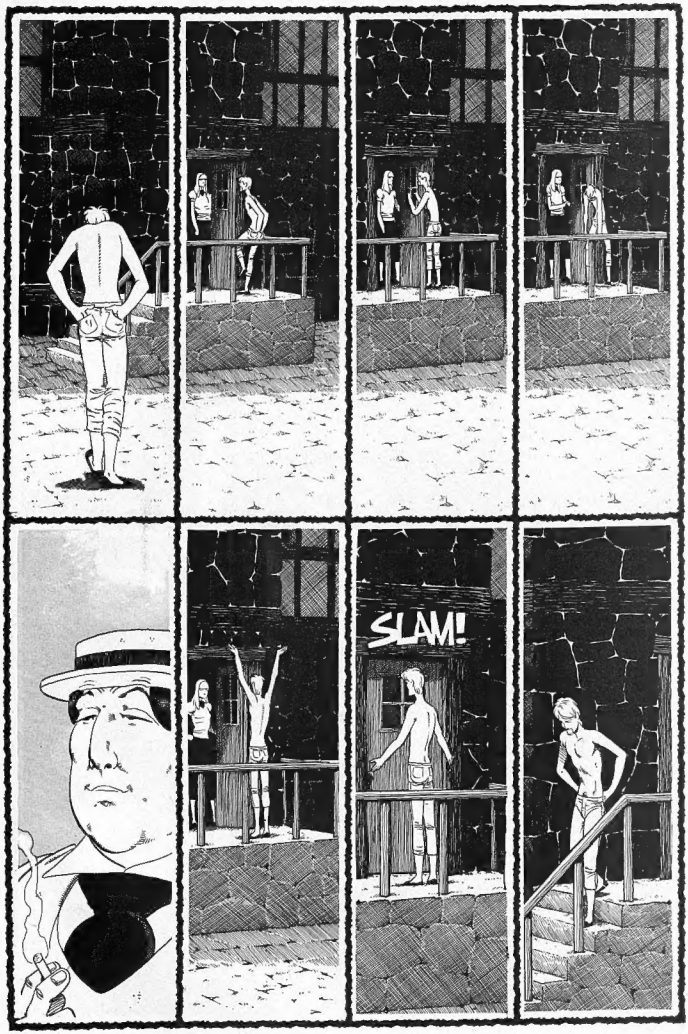
Changes, Pud? What sort of changes?

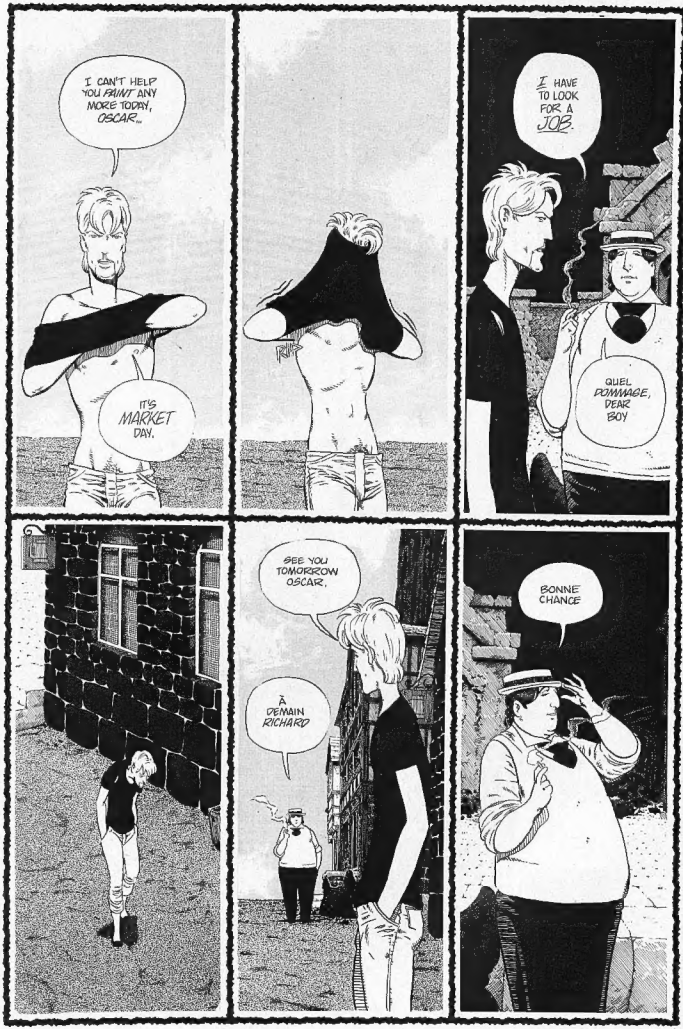
Don't move, Miss Jaka. Please.
I'm not going to hurt you.

AND THAT'S YOUR HEART'S FONDEST DESIRE?
THAT'S IT...
A SON.
SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE
I CLOSE MY EYES AND I CAN SEE HIM
LITERALLY SEE HIM...
JUST AS IF HE WAS STANDING RIGHT THERE
SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE
AND HE WON'T A SKINNY RUNT LIKE ME, EITHER
NO?
HECK NO... HE'S A FIGHTER! TOUGH. TOUGH AS NAILS
SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE
I'M GOING TO GIVE HIM A FOAL WHEN HE TURNS TEN YEARS OLD...
ASK ME WHY I'M GOING TO GIVE HIM A FOAL WHEN HE TURNS TEN YEARS OLD...

TELL ME, RICHARD
WHY ARE YOU GOING TO GIVE YOUR SON A FOAL WHEN HE TURNS TEN YEARS OLD?
EVERY MORNING HE'S GOING TO LIFT THAT FOAL OVER HIS HEAD! EVERY MORNING!
FOR THREE YEARS.
SO BY THE TIME HE TURNS THIRTEEN
SCRAPE SCRAPE
HE'LL BE ABLE TO LIFT A FULL-GROWN HORSE OVER HIS HEAD
THAT'S WHY I'M GOING TO GIVE HIM A FOAL WHEN HE TURNS TEN YEARS OLD
WHAT A PERFECTLY CHARMING NOTION
OF COURSE JAKA WANTED...
WANTS A LITTLE GIRL,
MM.
I HAVE A PUBLISHER WITH THE SAME PREFERENCE
LIKE I TOLD HER
FIRST...
A SON
THEN SHE CAN HAVE ALL THE LITTLE GIRLS SHE...
RICK.


WHAT?
WHAT!!
=SIGH=


SLAM!


I CAN'T HELP YOU PAINT ANY MORE TODAY, OSCAR...
IT'S MARKET DAY.
I HAVE TO LOOK FOR A JOB.
QUEL DOMMAGE, DEAR BOY
SEE YOU TOMORROW OSCAR.
À DEMAIN RICHARD
BONNE CHANCE

SHE TREMBLED, anxious and sickened by her own rebellion, heard the sound of shuffling, dreaded footsteps on the polished tile in the entryway beyond. Jaka was convinced, now, that Nurse *had* seen the door swing shut and her heart squirmed convulsively, like a trapped mouse, within her tiny bosom. Nurse's footsteps retreated in the direction of the outer portico, only to return seconds later and pause directly before the Locked Door.

"Jaka?"

The voice, so close, scarcely muffled at all by the inches-thick wood, was like a punishing blow to the frail child, caught practising her first adult sized Deception. Even in the terror of that moment, a part of her feared as much for her soul as her safety.

"Jaka! Are you in there?"

The Obedience Nurse had crafted within her Charge over the long days and years of their association; a patchwork, stitched lovingly and patiently out of anxiety, self-loathing and guilt in a variety of patterns and colours; served well her Guardian Cause. Even as Jaka exerted greater upward pressure on the door-handle, even as her scalp grew hot and sprouted a wave of warm droplets high on her forehead and in the hollows above and behind her ears; even then, her lips parted and she prepared to answer in the affirmative.

Jaka's 'yes' died a parched and silent death in a throat dehydrated by her terrible fear.

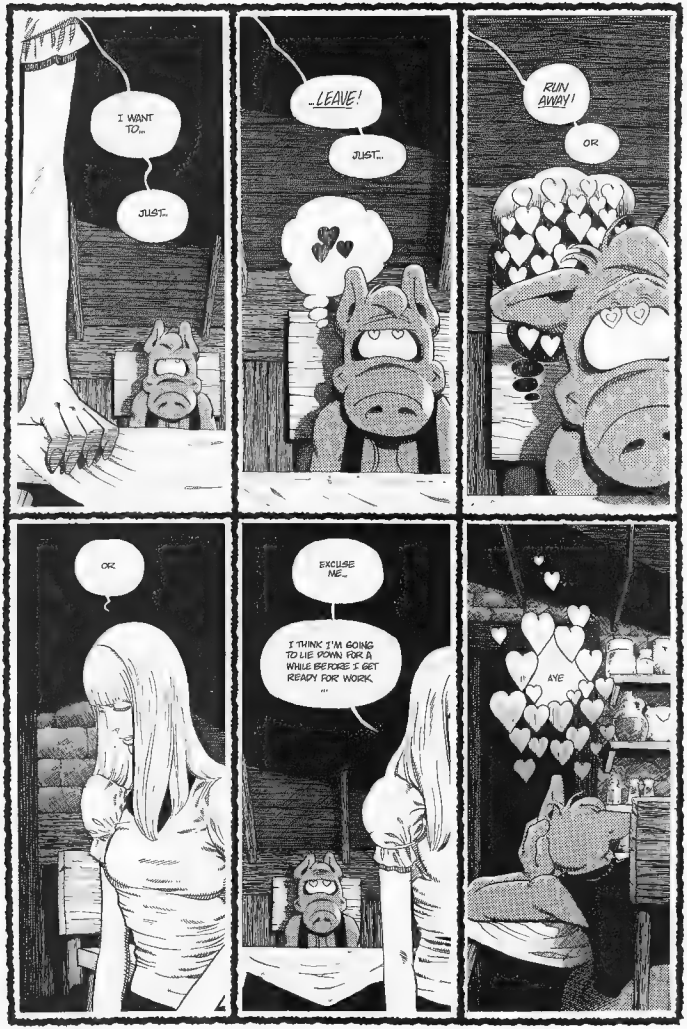
The door handle began to move, pressing first upward against the lower joints of her fingers and then downward against the balls of her thumbs.

"JAKA?"

HE'S JUST SO... SO...IMPRACTICAL SOMETIMES
THINKING WE CAN LIVE FOREVER ON THREE COPPER BITS A DAY...
AND HAVE A BABY.
I TRY EXPLAINING TO HIM HOW MUCH IT COSTS TO RAISE A CHILD... FOOD.. CLOTHING...
SCHOOLING.
AND ALL HE CAN TALK ABOUT IS BUYING THE BABY A HORSE.
WE LIVE IN AN APARTMENT ON THE SIDE OF A MOUNTAIN
WHERE WOULD WE KEEP IT? I ASK HIM.
WHAT WOULD WE FEED IT? I ASK HIM.

"I'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT"
HE ALWAYS SAYS THAT.
"I'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT"
BUT HE NEVER DOES
IT'S JUST HIS WAY OF IGNORING THE TRUTH.
THAT WE'RE POOR.
WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN POOR AND WE ALWAYS WILL BE POOR.
ALWAYS.

WHEN I THINK OF THE MONEY I USED TO MAKE WHEN I WAS SINGLE
THE TIPS ALONE
I NEED A CHANGE.
THAT'S WHAT I NEED
I'M TIRED OF THINKING AND WORRYING AND...
AND ARGUING
IT'S LIKE SOME CRUSHING WEIGHT THAT JUST GETS HEAVIER AND HEAVIER AND...


I WANT TO...
JUST...
...LEAVE!
JUST...
RUN AWAY!
OR
OR
EXCUSE ME...
I THINK I'M GOING TO LIE DOWN FOR A WHILE BEFORE I GET READY FOR WORK. ...
AYE

SHE HELD FAST HER bottom lip trembling; sweat stinging her eyes where wincing gave access

The door-handle stopped moving.

Seconds later it moved once more, this time downward only, its force doubled and redoubling to match the single-mindedness of its manipulator. Downward, with a sure strength that would brook no denial. Downward and downward, grinding ornate depressions into the nearly non-existent layer of flesh which covered the bones of Jaka's hand.

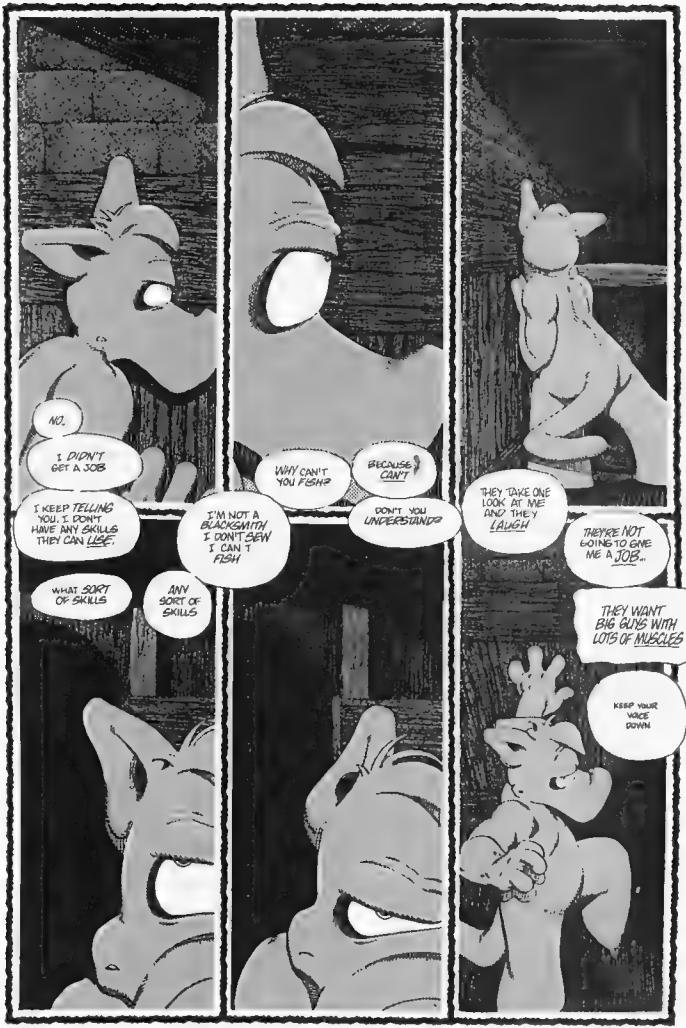
Jaka pressed her lower body against the Locked Door feeling the bones of her pelvic girdle grind painfully against the hard wood as she arched her back. She squeezed her shoulders forward and together; felt the sharp pain where her elbows dug into her nethermost ribs. Rivulets of perspiration raced down along her spine, pooled at her waistband. She arched her back still further, making the pain worse, but in some manner counter-balancing the pressure so that it no longer seemed to build upon itself so relentlessly.

AT THAT EXACT moment, the pressure stopped.

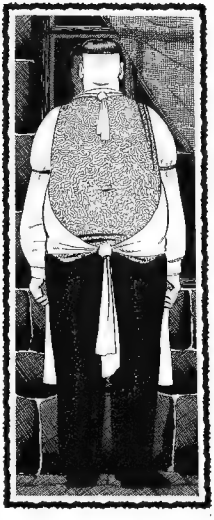
Jaka heard Nurse's footsteps disappear, once more, in the direction of the outer portico, this time continuing out to the flagstones where their reverberations escaped the confines of the House of Tavers Family Quarters and rose to freedom in the clear, cool skies.

Jaka slumped against her right arm and tried very hard to swallow.

KLIK
CLAK
SLAM
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
SLAM


NO.
I DIDN'T GET A JOB
I KEEP TELLING YOU. I DON'T HAVE ANY SKILLS THEY CAN LOSE.
WHAT SORT OF SKILLS
ANY SORT OF SKILLS
I'M NOT A BLACKSMITH I DON'T SEW I CAN'T FISH
WHY CAN'T YOU FISH?
BECAUSE I CAN'T
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?
THEY TAKE ONE LOOK AT ME AND THEY LAUGH
THEY'RE NOT GOING TO GIVE ME A JOB..
THEY WANT BIG GUYS WITH LOTS OF MUSCLES
KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN

WHAT ABOUT THE MERCHANTS?
THEY DON'T NEED ANYBODY
DID YOU ASK?
I ASK ALL THE TIME THEY DON'T NEED ANYBODY...
WELL THAT ONLY LEAVES A FEW HUNDRED DOESN'T IT?
TWENTY. MAYBE THIRTY
HOW MANY?
LOTS AND LOTS..
HOW MANY OF THEM DID YOU ASK?
THEY DON'T NEED ANYBODY. IT'S MOTHERS AND FATHERS AND THEIR KIDS..
IF THEY NEED SOMEBODY, THEY JUST HIRE AN UNCLE OR A COUSIN...
IF YOU DON'T WANT TO WORK
I WANT TO WORK. I TOLD YOU..



You and your husband, Miss Jaka. You're happy here?

Oh, yes, Pud. You've been just wonderful. We owe you a lot.

You're very lucky to have each other, Miss Jaka.

Yes. Yes we are.

I'd like both of you to stay here for a long time.

Oh, Pud. I'm so glad. We are happy here.

Except. There will have to be some changes made.

Changes, Pud? What sort of changes?

AARDVARK COMMENT

I'm dashing off this merest tad smidgin of a notelet to you because, to be frankly brutal, I have nothing at all better to do than nurse an unreasoning resentment toward people more famous than myself. I am only mentioning the fact that you are sickeningly talented and no-doubt put together because I am a great believer in sarcasm in literary criticism. I am only refraining from launching a scathng attack on your literary ambitions because firstly I believe you are using an acreage of prose to annoy people, and secondly because purple is my favourite colour. BUT! It's different! Who am I, a mere amoeba in the gene pool of life to criticise a highly evolved orgasm like you Mr. Sim, your massiveness, sir.

Sorry to branch off at this point but just what are your southern neighbours DOING! I greatly admire the sheer decadence and moral values that encourage the use of small arms fire to ensure first use of public telephones, but is Debbie Gibson REALLY necessary? Whoopsadaisy! I'm getting flak at the moment for spitting on the dinosaur carcass of the greatful dead in my last letter, so I'd better walk on tippy toe near your hallowed institutions; for fear I wake them up. My last carefully considered statement on this subject is that if you don't like sonic youth then you're probably a poof. And no, I'm not, I was only 8 in '76. Really, that's SO obvious!

Has anyone else noticed how stupid the Buck Rogers TV shows are?

Well I'm glad you finally thought of reprinting the first issues, but are you ever going to let comic shops buy those big book things? I certainly don't possess even half the energy or a third of the stupidity to fool around with monopoly money and bulky envelopes ordering one direct from you. I'd have to move somewhere with a larger letterbox! Listen David, Jesus got born on the 25th so people like you could make money with precisely this kind of cynical marketing ploy. What are you, ungrateful? The best piece of advice I can give is never eat an orange after brushing your teeth.

My favourite drawing for ages is the UH UH one in issue something or other. Gnarly! Can I be absolutely shameless at this point and suggest your readers try my 'Lisa's Red!' fanzine as a painless alternative to feeding cheese McBurgers to their prehistoric ancestors? I mean, holy moly! Evolutionary suicide! or…has it…ALREADY HAPPENED? Anyway, we aim to push back the boundaries of censorship by printng some incredibly revoltng and slanderous items, so if anybody wants to send me something I'll probably include it. You know me, I can't say no and just love to recieve letters! (break every rule!)

Well, I suppose I had better get along and sell some heroin to the kids next door or something. Goodbye dear.

Yours gorgeously,

Cassandra the witch
140 Drakies avenue
Inverness
1V2 3SE

P.S. Wrote this in the botanic gardens in Glasgow. Excuse the squirrel shit.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

For four years now I've been trying to motivate myself to get real fucked up one night and write a letter to you that usually doesn't make sense. For some reason I usually never get around to it. Maybe writing one hungover will have the same effect.

I finished my exams three days ago and I don't quite remember what all I did this weekend. I think I burned up a reclining chair and broke alot of beer bottles. I even passed out in my car. The point is, why do all the letters you get read like everyone was stoned from hell when they wrote them? I can't write anything when I'm fucked up. Sometimes I find it difficult to even walk or take a piss!

With only four hours of sleep for the weekend and high amounts of foreign substances still in my system, I hope this letter was meaningless. At least I tried.

Russell Howze
Travelers Rest, SC

P.S. I am writing this to the guy that makes the *Cerebus* comic aren't I?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

After long contemplation, I am finally fucked up enough to write a letter that may make sense. So what do ya want – junk food and a Dr. Pepper? I mean what is life all about?

- Is it making $32,000 a year and voting for Bush?
- Is it smoking a quarter a week?
- Is it reading Cerebus?

I don't know. You decide and let me know in the morning when I have a hangover.

I think I'll imagine psychedelic thoughts and dream about the Beatles…and Aardvarks!

Russell Howze
Travelers Rest, SC

★★★★★★★★★★

Hey Dave!

I'm sitting here in my student digs and I'm listening to the Pixies new LP, so what? Well I've just read Jaka's story No. 5 and well I loved it till death. It reminded me a lot of my younger days with my girlfriend and each one of Jaka's story has a hidden meaning for me. Well this was just a short note to say that somebody appreciates what you do every month and will keep on doing so,

Yours gratefully

A. Hamilton
13 Inglewood Park
Bangor, Co. Down
N. Ireland, BT20 3E4

P.S. Say what kinda shit were you smokin' when you thought Cerebus up anyway!!!

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave & Ger & Monique (& Hi to Zee while I'm at it), mainly Dave though,

I've left it far too long to let you know how much I like Cerebus. I've been reading it for about 100 issues or so, and I'm enjoying every minute of it. Frequent re-readings are a favourite pass time (no other comique is given such a privilege).

The reason that I finally got around to writing was your "experimental" sequence "Pogrom's Progress". It was the best piece of graphic storytelling I have yet read. I say yet, because I'm sure that you'll outdo it…you'll have to, or someone else will (there's so much scope in the medium). I did not find the story slow, rather I found the pace superb. The time taken to look at "moments" in the characters' lives paid off.

Your skills at writing text far surpassed my hopes for you. Issue 115

was the first and only comique that I've ever rated 11 out of 10 on my radio show, Grafique Attaque. Your format innovations and ability with "a whole mess of words sitting next to a picture" were major contributing factors to that.

Lastly, please do your best to ignore all the excrement thrown your way about your attitudes to such things as publishers, distributors and editors. In any industry (for want of a better word) dealing with entertainment, creators rights are of paramount importance. Can you imagine a world where the only comiques we could get were X-Mutant "products"? I can, and it scares the willies out of me.

Ciao,

Dudley Arthur Horque
4/115 Haulin Street
Bendigo, Victoria
Australia 3550

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Msrs. Aardvark & Comment,

The scum rises to the surface of the teacup, just as the tea leaves do not.

Deep.

Profound.

What a letter column.

Yours sincerely,

Brad Welch
20 Caloma St.
Underwood
Queensland
Australia
4119

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Mr. Sim,

I had a very interesting dream last night, and I wanted to tell you about it. In this dream I was in a strange room, and in front of me were two doors. Behind one door was every issue of *Cerebus* ever published, all in original form and hand signed by the great Dave Sim, along with several original prints by Gerhard and...well, you get the idea. Behind the other door was a beautiful woman who wanted my hodge.

I thought about my choice for a few seconds and...Needless to say, I chose the woman.

However, the fact that I thought about the choice for a few seconds goes to show how much I love your book. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

J. Paul Read III
1704 Blue Fountain
Godfrey, IL
62035

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I figured that a lot of comic artists come from Canada because there's nothing to do there except draw. I'd like to know why you try to make yourself a big star by having photographs of yourself in the back of your comics. You never see Frank Miller or Todd McFarlane's picture's in the back of their comics. Plus, their much more famous than you. You're not even that famous, and here you are on the back of your Cerebus comics. A lot of people who live around here haven't even heard of Cerebus. I'm sure you're more popular in Canada but that's a different story because there's nothing there but tree's and comic book stores. The worst part of it all is that you even have Gerhard's picture on your comics. All he does is draw the backgrounds and colour the front cover. Why does he even take picture's of himself? If you notice in issues #94, 96, and #105, Gerhard took those pictures of himself.

I'm even surprised you have an Aardvark Comment. I didn't know that many people knew Cerebus. Gee, there must be a lot of people out there with absolutely no life but to read comics everyday. That's pretty sad if you think about it. My suggestion to you is, to make a movie or an animated TV show about Cerebus. That way you'll be more popular. If you look at Batman, he's becoming really popular since his movie's coming out on June 23rd. You could be just as popular if you just publicised yourself a bit more. Here's a good idea, why don't you have Cerebus a guest host on Alf? They would make a great team. Keep that in mind OK? And tell Gerhard to get a life and stop taking picture's of himself.

Sincerely yours,

Max Coniglio
Cambrige, Mass.
02140

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Okay, so it's Friday and the new books came in today and gosh (!), not only did an issue of Cerebus Bi-weekly come in, but a *real* issue of Cerebus, too (#120) !!!

So it's later on and I'm at home reading the day's stash and I get to the Aardvark Comment and there I see it. The name.

Rob Lavender.

Now that's a name you don't hear too often. Bruce Riseborough hasn't heard it in years, but he still wants him to be his best man. We haven't heard it in years, but we still want our money.

That's right, Dave. It's a bloody bounty hunt.

So, Rob, if you're reading this, *when* you're reading this, think of us. Think of the wonderful times you spent in the store with Larry and Paul and the rest of the huddled masses. Think of your bank account. We do.

Eleven dollars, Rob. That's all we ask. Eleven dollars and we won't track you down like a wounded animal. Eleven dollars to placate years of trauma and lost revenue. That's all we're asking for, Rob. Cough it up.

And finally to Dave, thanks once again for allowing the truth to emerge. After that "Larry Avenger" debacle...well, no harm done I suppose. Vaya con Dios, amigo. And arrivaderci, Roma!

The Guys from
That's Entertainment
151 Chandler St.
Worcester, MA
01609

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

You're right. "Jaka's Story" *is* boring. Sure wish everything boring could be this interesting.

Hey,

Mike Canich
P.O. Box 31
Romeo, MI
48065

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I'm writing in response to your "Note From the President" in issue 119 (?) where you stated that so far nobody wrote to tell you that JAKA'S STORY is boring. Well, that's GREAT! and no, I'm not writing to tell you that it is boring – because it's not. Nope, not at all. I'm writing to tell you my theory as to why your readers are enjoying it so far (or at least why I'm enjoying it).

It's because they can identify with it.

Since most of your readers are not your average comic book fan (i.e. culturally, sexually, and socially retarded) I think we can assume that they have had a relationship with somebody and many have been involved in a love triangle.

Although JAKA'S STORY is primarily about the character of Jaka (her history, psyche, etc.), an underlying subplot – and something *else* to keep us interested – is the love triangle between Jaka, Rick, and Cerebus (or "love square" if you want to count Pud).

You see Dave, it's scary, but everything that has happened to Cerebus so far, between he and Jaka anyway, has happened to me and a woman I had a relationship with not long ago. Okay – she wasn't a dancer, but she is a former model; and I'm not an aardvark, but I am a cute (girls seem to think so), cuddly (read slightly overweight),

semi-alcoholic who seems to have a way of getting involved in money-making/success-making schemes with other people (I'm an artist who latched on with a writer doing a comic book, I publish an underground newspaper, I manage a rock band, and all at 20 years of age!)

Anyway…

She moved, and from then on she would pop in and out of my life at the most unexpected moments (like in "The Night Before" in HIGH SOCIETY and "acquired tastes" in CHURCH AND STATE). I could have told her not to, but I didn't want to be blamed later on for holding her back from getting on with her life – I loved her that much.

Anyway…

I thought your handling of the Cerebus-Jaka relationship was uncannily close to ours until JAKA'S STORY. It got worse. You see, she found a boyfriend; and I understood because she was very lonely so I took it in stride. Then I met him and he treated me like shit. I thought he was an asshole (by the way – I think Rick is an asshole too. Probably because I identify Rick with "the other guy"). But everything you wrote into the story line so far has happened. I got so desperate that I gave her the speech to come back because I loved her so much, and got the same response: "I love you, but I'm not 'in love' with you" (it ranks up there with "I don't want to ruin our friendship" as the ultimate female cop-out for not wanting to have sex – right?). I also slept in the other room while they slept together, but I didn't cry. I just gritted my teeth. If I had lost control of most of the world and THEN lost the only woman I love(d), and respect(ed) I probably would have cried too. (Actually, I give Cerebus credit for just crying, I probably would have killed myself. I love that little fighter. He's such an inspiration.)

Now you only have one more thing to do to make the story a perfect imitation of my life.

In what issue does Cerebus get drunk, call Rick a pussy and punch the crap out of him.

Come on, Dave. I did it, and I doubt if Cerebus is more mature than I am.

Sincerely,

Marty Hudak
729 Norwood Ave.
Youngstown, OH
44510

P.S. Are you ever gonna come back to Mid-Ohio-Con? We have to party together, man.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Sorry for not writing in awhile, but you would not believe the utter bullshit I've had to go through in order to get a copy of Cerebus #119. Three weeks, ago, I walked into Bid Time Return here in London, and asked if by chance the latest Cerebus was in. I was told "no". That was fine; I'd read in the CBG that misfortune had befallen you, and whenever Cerebus came out again was fine by me. (I'm not sure what happened to you, but I hope you're feeling better. No sarcasm intended; I was honestly worried when I saw that CBG article.)

Anyways…

Later that week I happened to enter the Comic Book Collector, way on the other side of town, and lo and behold, there was a stack of 119s. I asked the guy at the counter how long he had them, and he said a couple of weeks.

But out of a misplaced sense of loyalty to BTR, I didn't pick one up. I returned there, and again asked when Cerebus would arrive. One of the owners, in a very irate tone, replied, "Wednesday".

Guess what arrived on Wednesday? Nothing. The owner, now very pissed off, but not at the lack of the book, but apparently at my bugging him for a service he promises to supply, tells me "Friday"

Now, I'm normally very patient. But when Friday dawned, and there was no 119 I became angry. I asked them if they had talked to the distributors; I was told that they were thinking about it. I told them that if I was being shorted books, I would be on the phone in seconds.

"Yeah, well…"

But gee, Dave, do you think they were short of X-Men? Spider-Man? Noooooo.; there were veritable truckloads of those. Funny that…

Then I was told they would not probably be getting 119 now; they would have to back-order it, and they seemed reluctant to do that, since very few (relatively) people buy Cerebus. That-fucking-well-tore-it.

I went back across town to the much smaller, much more cramped CBC, and was fortunate enough to find that elusive issue.

Dave, just what is it with these people? Does Multi-Book have it out for you? Are Cerebus readers less important than those bloody Mutant readers? Did you piss off the people at BTR recently? Did I? Did Ger?

Perhaps I'm over-reacting; having re-read the letter up to this point it does sound that way. But the killer of all this is that BTR insists people become "members"; for a small fee, they promise to give you the best of all comics on the list you provide them with. But regularly comics are missed, and you have to scan the shelves in order to make sure you got everything you collect. When you tell them you missed an issue, they smile and go "Oh. Must have missed that."

A good example of this occured a few months ago, again with a Cerebus title. My wife, Cheryl, having put up with my espousing Cerebus day in and day out, finally decided to pick up the reprints to see just what all my hullaballoo was about. She added it to her list. Now, she's one of those people who will sit and read a comic after she has three or four months worth, not having the time to read them as they come out.

So one Sunday night she sat down with her reprints and a couple of bottles of Black Label; and discovered to her dismay that her issues went from 3 to 7; 4, 5, 6, were not set aside for her. And to get them BTR would have to back-order, and you know how they feel about that.

Just a note of clarification: Bruno Andreacchi, the founder of BTR, and the person who took the time to get me interested in Cerebus, and made all the policies like weekly prizes and special days, is no longer with BTR. For the full story behind that, (and boy, is it a whopper) I suggest you ask him at the next convention you see him at. It'll make your blood boil, I assure you.

Sorry, Dave, for using your ears as witness to my fury. But you seemed the only one I could talk to. I'm still furious. As for 119, it was beautiful.

Sean Twist
8-290 Springbank Drive
London, Ontario
N6J 2Y9

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

Uh, so here I am, it's late, really late, I've this big chemistry test tomorrow for which I really should be studying, I'm listening to *Double Bummer* by Bongwater (anyone who has heard this album should send me one dollar), thinking about just how blown away I am by the fifth installment of *Jaka's Story* (I really am sorry that I never write you any negative letters) and wondering whose fault everything is. So far I've ruled out myself and that's about it.

The scene which describes Jaka's childhood fear of the "insects" in #118 affected me most. You captured the sense of inane childhood fears we all experienced; the abstractness, the weird and undefinable fears. I remember my big childhood fear: at night the

light from the living room would reflect on my bedroom doorknob, making a kind of grinning malicious face. I was terribly frightened of it. Jaka's "insects" conveyed the same feeling.

My favourite issues of *Church and State* were the ones in which Jaka appeared. It's good to see some of the loose ends from those issues brought together. It was also good to see the more open and personal side of Cerebus as he apologised to Jaka for treating her so badly. A love story in *Cerebus*. Hmmmmm. It'll be interesting to see how it works out.

I'd love to stay and chat but, hell, I have problems of my own to take care of, by the way, I rescind my comment in my last letter about token appearances by the bug; I dig the smaller cast of characters now; I like the more straightforward story. Finally, Dave, if you've any theories on whose fault everything is please let me know, keeping in mind that I haven't yet ruled you out. In fact you're one of the front runners. (Let's see, okay, *I'll* be the straight man…)

Mike Robbins
4590 Clubheights Drive
Colorado Springs, CO
80906

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

It's 2:30 in the morning and I'm thinking about Pete Townsend…

Don't ever throw away your integrity, Dave. It's the best thing about you and you can never get it back once it's gone.

Sincerely,

Tom Wilson
Solon, Ohio

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Regarding our anonymous friend's response to Anthony Gallagher's letter.

I feel it's time for me to throw my hat into the ring and join the great "wank" controversy that is developing in the pages of your magazine. Particularly, I must take exception to our anonymous friend's comment that "masturbation would lead a person to know the difference between reality and fantasy, *when reality is more comforting and warm than fantasy*." What we in fact have here is what our visionary friend Cecil Murgatroyd would call a further glamorization of sexual intercourse, which, besides the potential danger of such in our current AIDS-torn world, is simply not true, as we shall soon see. The truth of the matter is that masturbation itself represents the ideal sexual union, as it simultaneously satisfies a desire while leaving that desire intact. As everyone must recognize, it is impossible to desire that with which one coincides, or to put it in layman's terms, it is impossible to want what you already have. Now Dave, before you think I'm some raving sophist equivocating trivial points of semantics, I'll have you know that I take this all from very good authority, namely Rouseau's *Confessions*. According to Rouseau, masturbation, "this vice, which shame and timidity find so convenient, has a particular attraction for lively imaginations. It allows them to dispose, so to speak, of the whole female sex at their will, and to make any beauty who tempts them serve their pleasure without the need of first obtaining her consent." Similarly, when Rouseau discusses his quasi-incestous relationship with a woman he refers to as "Mama", he asserts: "I only felt the full strength of my attraction to her when she was out of my sight." Thus it is actually the woman's absence, in both cases, that gives immediacy to her imaginary possession. In the actual act of sexual intercourse, the desired object is at a greater remove from the subject than during masturbation because of the object's inherent and insurmountable difference from both the subject and the subject's desire. Or as the great contemporary French philosopher Jacques Derrida says in his reading of Rouseau, "without the possibility of this difference, the desire of presence as such would not find its breathing-space. That means by the same token that this desire carries in itself the destiny of its nonsatisfaction. Difference produces what it forbids, making possible the very thing that it makes impossible." Well anyway, it makes perfect sense to me.

Yours,

Andrew Knapp
123 Verano Place
Irvine, CA
92715

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave and Ger,

Listen:

It was Monday, I believe. I usually frequent my local comic shop on Friday's, but I had been away. I came back Sunday (nice trip, it was, thank you) and headed out on my self-extended lunch break to find 2 (countem', two) Cerebi (Cerebusses?) in my personal bag (Oh, yes, I *AM* so important). I, being the poor bastard that I am, and also in dire need of a "Tales of the Beanworld" No. 13 (which had been delayed, but then graced said bag) put down the last remains of my cash and went hungry. (I hope you appreciate it, dammit). Anyhow, I was looking around at all the new titles to see if there was anything that interested me. Then I saw her. Jaka, that is, but it *wasn't* Jaka. It was a woman. She was on a cover.

"A Cerebus?" I thought, maybe, because it was obviously your art.

But it wasn't.

But then I noticed.

I noticed the name Zolastraya. Zoli. It *HAD* to be Dave Sim art, or an incredible facsimile. Or someone who really digs Cerebus putting out a B/W Book. It's not an Aardvark-Vanaheim and its not your art inside…so what the fuck is it?

Someone you've never met before.

James Murphy
8 Wycombe Way
Princeton, Jct., NY
08550

P.S. The Store I go to is "Comic Relief". The guy who runs it helps you out alot by hanging rare Cerebus issues around and recommending your book. They're good people.

P.P.S. My foot hurts. I mean really, really, hurts.

P.P.P.S. I mean *really*.

P.P.P.P.S. Oh yeah…I like Jaka's story, so if people complain you just tell me…why…why…why I'll moidalize'em.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

My last three letters did nothing but prove I was illiterate. I was thankful they were not printed, but still, you saw them! How was I supposed to make a good impression with letters like that? Although I would like a letter printed it is more important that you see them. I mean what's the big attraction to the letters page? I can only think of one; you get to swear. I can say shit all I want. And fuck in moderation. I get bitched at if I say that around home. The freedom to say fuck is very important to me. It's what freedom of speech is all about.

James Lloyd
Vernon, B.C.

P.S. On the last page of #121 the self portrait of you on the phone looks much better than the one of you on the cover of The Comics Journal. Goddammit, Dave! Have some self-esteem.

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Oscar Wilde
preface
to "Picture of
Dorian Gray"